

Courses should teach etiquette, add signs, rangers

It seems every summer the topic of slow play is raised. With more and more golfers—more beginning golfers—slow play will continue to be discussed and commented upon.

Recently, I had yet another experience that reinforces the need for continued discussion, new ideas and continued education for the golfing public.

Although not a bad experience, it was typical of the new golfer not knowledgeable in golfing etiquette. While playing a quick round with my brother at a public facility, we had played five holes in less than 40 minutes when we caught up with a foursome, three obviously beginners. After waiting 10-15 minutes

on holes 6, 7 and 8, and after seeing four tee shots fly into woods and water hazard, I invited myself to play through. Reluctantly, the group allowed us through but later hit into us on a par 3, which could have caused injury.

There are several ways to educate the golfing public to speeding up play. The fundamental rule is to allow faster players through. This is well stated on signage and on the



Charles von Brecht

scorecards at the facility we played.

Here are a few more suggestions for educating the new golfers so that everyone will enjoy the game:

1. More signage. All par 3s should have signs to alert players on the tee to hit before the players on the green putt out. The signage should also note that faster players may play through.

2. As I've mentioned, when rangers are not available, members of the groundscrew might monitor play and give direction—particularly when there are a few holes open ahead of two or three foursomes.

3. I disagree with time limits per hole; there always will be five-hour rounds at busy public facilities, but

if we all offer better education to the golfing public, perhaps we can work to make these longer rounds more enjoyable.

The recent death by lightning at the U.S. Open is a tragic example of the danger of not heeding educational messages to the golfing public (in this case, the gallery.)

How many times have we heard not to take cover under a tree in case of lightning? Although, I am sure, many lives have been saved by the education provided by the USGA, PGA and the PGA Tour, this tragedy should make us aware of the importance of continuing education for golfers and gallery.

COMMENTARY

Preaching to the converted doesn't spread truth

"It's like preaching to the converted," Dr. Richard Cooper said after speaking to lawn-care and seed industry people at Lofts Seed Co.'s field day in Martinsville, N.J., June 12.

The crowd had agreed wholeheartedly as Cooper showed results of several university tests showing chemical use on turfgrass does not lead to pollution of ground or surface water.

If Cooper had given the same speech to environmental activists he might have dressed in a slicker to protect himself from a barrage of tomatoes.

In the whole spectrum of humanity, Cooper said afterward, there are people to the far left and people to the far right on any one

issue. They won't listen, won't budge from their viewpoint—no matter if the sky falls all around them and their beliefs.

The other 90 percent will listen to reason, wisdom and knowledge. They will listen to a body of knowledge, to the results of scientific study.

Environmental activists, Cooper said, are philosophically opposed to use of pesticides. No amount of evidence will change their mind.

The "converted" in this instance are people working in golf course



Mark Leslie

maintenance, landscaping and lawn care who rely on a certain—though increasingly smaller—amount of pesticides and fertilizers to do their work. They have been joined by some of the "90 percent uncommitted" who have seen the statistics, heard the arguments, and agreed with studies like those at Penn State, the University of Rhode Island, and on Cape Cod.

Yet most of that 90 percent uncommitted stand out in the midst of a storm of words, swayed left or right by the bent of the speaker.

It seems someone somewhere will always take a stand for something. "Since barbarism has its pleasures it naturally has its apologists," Spanish-born poet and philosopher George Santayana once

said.

Yet, wisdom and understanding are "a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed," we're told in Proverbs 3:18.

The golf industry has to stand on wisdom and understanding, particularly on such divisive issues as chemical use. We can speak to one another until the sheep come home but it won't win a single "convert." The message has to go out to the public.

Hats off to Dick Drew, superintendent at Olde Salem municipal golf course in Salem, Mass., who spoke out when opponents rose up against an expanded course because of concern over chemical use.

Continued on page 11

GUEST COMMENTARY

The pro's side of the superintendent-pro coin

By Gene P. Smith

"Hey, Pro, what's wrong with the greens today?" "Why is the back nine closed?" "What's that strange smell on the course?" "Why is there a big hole in the middle of four fairway?"

These are just a few of the hundreds of questions members and guests ask the golf professionals when something unusual takes place on the golf course. The pro's credibility will be tested with each question, and without an intelligent, informative answer, that credibility could vanish.

Knowing what is happening on the course and why is as important as knowing how to fit a set of clubs, run a tournament or give a lesson. Only one person can properly inform the pro on course activity and that is the superintendent. With his help, the pro will be able to answer the many questions about the condition of the course and what activity might be taking place.

A good relationship with open communication is essential between

the pro and superintendent. Meeting regularly, playing the course together and discussing present projects and future plans will keep the pro informed of what chemicals are being applied to the course, when aeration will be taking place, when the irrigation system is being repaired, etc.

Throughout my 21 years as a golf professional I have heard the horror stories of greens being aerified the day before a member-guest tournament. At times there seemed to be a "we vs. they" attitude between pros and superintendents.

In recent years I have seen this attitude change to the extent that we see each other as part of a team with a common goal, which is to provide the best possible playing conditions for our members and guests.



Gene Smith

The educational clinics and seminars conducted by the PGA of America and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America have enhanced the understanding of the roles we each play in working toward a successful golf operation.

Understanding each other's responsibilities is essential in cultivating a working relationship between these two key individuals. The pro is usually the first person a golfer sees in the pro shop and the person most likely to be asked any questions about course conditions and playability.

He is in a position to make the superintendent look like a hero or someone who is less than competent.

Conversely, the superintendent is in the same position in regards to how his crew reacts to the golfers on the course. If play catches the fairway mower and the maintenance worker has no regard for the golfers, it could be an ugly scene in the pro shop after the round.

One important duty on the course

is proper marking. It's hard enough to get golfers to play by the Rules of Golf, but put them on a poorly marked course and it becomes impossible.

I generally prefer marking the course myself or allowing my assistant professionals to prepare it for tournaments. It becomes important when the crew begins mowing around boundary markers or hazards stakes that they get replaced immediately. The crew must understand why this must be done.

Mutual respect, cooperation, communication and teamwork are the necessary ingredients to a successful relationship between a golf professional and superintendent. Without these, one or the other, or both, could find themselves searching for a new position.

Gene Smith is the golf professional at DeBary Plantation Golf Club in DeBary, Fla. He is president of the North Florida Section of the PGA and is a member of the National PGA Rules Committee.

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